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ABSTRACT

As school-to-work systems evolve across the nation, teachers will assume a variety of new roles and responsibilities. The collaborative nature of school-to-work requires greater interaction between teachers and other partners in schools and the community. Innovative approaches to learning in school-to-work systems, such as project-based instructional strategies, are significant departures from traditional teaching practices. Professional development activities must be made available to provide teachers with what they need to know and be able to do to make a school-to-work system work. Some strategies for the professional development of teachers in school-to-work systems, based on research and experience of school-to-work practitioners across the nation, include the following: (1) professional development as a continuous improvement process; (2) helping teachers acquire worksite experiences; (3) making the best use of workshops and conferences, such as a "train-the-trainer" approach; (4) preparing teachers for new roles in school-to-work governance; (5) using teacher networks; and (6) working with teacher unions. (Lists 10 organizations, 2 journals, and 8 publications.) (KC)

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ED 416 394

School-to-Work and Professional Development for Teachers

As school-to-work systems evolve across the nation, teachers will assume a variety of new roles and responsibilities. The collaborative nature of school-to-work requires greater interaction between teachers and other partners in schools and the community. Teachers are often asked to assume a greater role in system governance, and work with employers and other educators to develop integrated curricula. Innovative approaches to learning in school-to-work systems, such as project-based instructional strategies, are significant departures from traditional teaching practices. An effective professional development system must be in place in order for teachers to embrace these changes.

Professional development activities must provide teachers with what they need to know and be able to do to make a school-to-work system work. For the purposes of this bulletin, professional development is a broad, inclusive term referring to the full range of activities that help teachers learn, improve their ability to teach, and interact with other partners in a school-to-work system. This resource bulletin presents strategies for the professional development of teachers in school-to-work systems, based on research and experience of school-to-work practitioners across the nation. This information is followed by a listing of organizations and publications that can provide further information and assistance on professional development of teachers in school-to-work systems.

Professional Development Strategies

Professional development as a continuous improvement process.
Professional development activities are most effective if they incorporate the key elements of the continuous improvement process--planning, implementation, and evaluation. Professional development planning should be a collaborative process that takes into account the timing, scope, and impact of a variety of different activities. Conducting a needs assessment that identifies gaps in abilities or knowledge can improve professional development planning. Teachers, in collaboration with other partners in the school-to-work system, can then choose specific professional development activities to help them achieve individual and system goals. To complete the continuous improvement cycle, both process and impact evaluations can help teachers incorporate lessons from their experiences into subsequent professional development activities.

The Texas school-to-work system has developed a comprehensive professional development plan that includes school-based, work-based, and connecting activities, mirroring the school-to-work system itself. The plan is based upon a needs assessment from 284 participants in 18 focus groups across the state. The state training collaborative, a core group of education and training professionals, conducts training for educators in both in-service and pre-service programs. A sample of the professional development programs includes a career decision-making workshop for counselors and teachers, TQM teacher training, computer aided training for competency-based curriculum development, teacher internships, and curriculum writing workshops. Evaluation of each of these programs is conducted to ensure that they meet the needs of participants.

Helping teachers acquire worksite experiences. Many critical elements of professional

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development programs take place in the schools, but the work-based nature of school-to-work initiatives necessitates a focus on teacher learning experiences outside of the classroom, particularly in the workplace. Teachers benefit in a number of ways from experiences in the workplace. Most teacher internships occur in a business or career area that is related to the teacher's area of instruction. From this experience, teachers can deepen their subject area knowledge through experience-based learning, and develop applications for use in the classroom. Teachers can also help advise students about the skills and knowledge necessary in that career. In addition to industry or career related knowledge, teachers are able to observe general workplace competencies, such as the SCANS skills, and incorporate them in classroom instruction.

Teacher internships help to solidify the business-education links necessary in school-to-work systems. Working directly with employers can give educators an appreciation for the business viewpoint and help them build teamwork skills that are necessary in their expanded role in the governance of school-to-work systems.

The Jackson-Hillsdale school-to-work system in Michigan uses teacher internships and a Business/Industry Fellowship Program in its professional development program. The internships provide teachers with one-day experiences in the workplace, while the employers pay the cost of hiring a substitute teacher. The Business/Industry Fellowship Program, operated through a local community college, places K-12 teachers in workplaces for six weeks during the summer. Teachers are exposed to all aspects of the industry, and are able to gain two graduate credits upon completion of the program.

Making the best use of workshops and conferences. Workshops and conferences can be an effective way to disseminate information to a large number of teachers. Many effective workshops and conferences use a "train-the-trainer" approach, in which teachers develop training skills and share information from these activities with fellow teachers and other partners working to develop school-to-work systems. The most effective sessions make use of the interactive, applied, and integrated approaches that teachers will be expected to use with their students. Rather than traditional one-way lectures, these professional development activities include ample opportunities for participants to experiment with the new concepts and techniques.

Another way to maximize the benefit of workshops and conferences begins with a solicitation of proposals for attendance from teachers. Through a competitive process, one of the teachers is selected to attend the workshop or conference. Other teachers can then pose specific questions that the attending teacher can ask the presenters or bring up in discussions. Returning to the school, the attending teacher can not only provide a summary of the key issues, but can also address the specific questions of other teachers, sharing the benefits of attendance.

Preparing teachers for new roles in school-to-work governance. As teachers are asked to assume new roles, share in decision-making, and increase their interaction with other partners in school-to-work systems, they will need training in areas such as teamwork and collaboration, change processes, consensus building, and conducting meetings. Rotating responsibilities in meetings in the school and at the partnership level can help teachers develop these skills, and can identify teachers with potential for leadership. Leadership training sessions that include assembling critical participants, vision development, and designing and implementing action plans can also help prepare teachers for their expanded role in the governance of school-to-work systems.

Using teacher networks. Teacher networks bring together educators from across the country who can share information and interact in an environment where both teaching and learning occur. They help to reduce the isolation of teachers and provide motivation and supportive environments. Teachers can take part in networks that specialize in a range of topics, from subject-specific networks, to regional and national networks focusing on issues such as

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diversity, curriculum integration, and assessment.

Working with teacher unions. Teacher unions are a valuable source of professional development information and activities. The National Education Association (NEA) and the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) provide a variety of professional development information and activities for teachers across the nation. For example, the AFT has published Principles for Professional Development to help teachers and education systems review, evaluate, improve, and design professional development programs.

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Effective Practices

Jackson-Hillsdale School-to-Work System: Scott Menzel, School-to-Work Coordinator, Jackson County Intermediate School District, 6700 Browns Lake Road, Jackson, MI 49201 (517) 787-2026.

Texas School-to-Work System: Linda Austin, Project Director, Texas Education Agency, Career and Technology Education Division, 1701 North Congress Avenue, Austin, TX 78701-1494 (512) 463-9688.

Organizations

American Federation of Teachers, the nation's second-largest teacher union, provides a range of activities on professional development and school-to-work initiatives. 555 New Jersey Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20001 (202) 879-4434.

American Vocational Association, an association of vocational-technical education professionals from high schools across America, provides a wide range of professional development activities, including workshops and publications. 1410 King Street, Alexandria, VA 22314 (703) 683-3111.

Association for Supervision & Curriculum Development (ASCD) is an international community of educators dedicated to the improvement of instructional supervision, instruction, and curricular design. ASCD disseminates information on education research and classroom practices and forges links among educators through publications, training programs, seminars, and conferences. 1250 North Pitt Street, Alexandria, VA 22314-1453 (703) 549-9110 Internet: http://www.ascd.org/

Center on Education and Work at the University of Wisconsin-Madison has undertaken a number of projects relating to the professional development of teachers in school-to-work systems. 964 Educational Sciences Building, 1025 West Johnson Street, Madison, WI 53706 (608) 263-4367 Internet: http://www.cew.wisc.edu/

National Center for Research on Vocational Education has funded a number of projects focusing specifically on professional development in curriculum integration and school-to-work. University of California at Berkeley, 1995 University Avenue, Suite 375, Berkeley, CA 94704 (510) 642-4004 Internet: http://vocserve.berkeley.edu/

National Education Association, the nation's largest teachers' union, provides a variety of services for the professional development of teachers. 1201 16th Street, NW, Washington, DC 20036 (202) 822-7727.

National Staff Development Council (NSDC) is committed to ensuring success for all students by improving schools through staff development. NSDC provides conferences,

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publications, and other services on a wide range of professional development topics. P.O. Box 240, Oxford, OH 45056 (513) 523-6029.

RAND corporation is developing a professional development workshop entitled Preparing Teachers to Design Classrooms that Work: A Mini-Sabbatical for High School Teachers and Teacher Trainers. The workshop utilizes the principles of adult learning and reflection in professional development and aims to develop teaching techniques by placing teachers in the culture of work. P.O. Box 2138, Santa Monica, CA 90407-2138 (310) 393-0411 Internet: http://www.rand.org/

Triangle Coalition for Science and Technology Education provides information on teacher internships, and has developed the Scientific Work Experience Programs for Teachers initiative, a national network that offers guidance material and technical assistance to help community partnerships sponsor teachers in the workplace. 5112 Berwyn Road, 3rd Floor, College Park, MD 20740 (301) 220-0870.

Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, an NCRVE grant site, has conducted case studies of professional development in school-to-work systems in addition to research and evaluation of professional development in vocational education. 112 Lane Hall, Blacksburg, VA 24061 (540) 231-5982.

Journals

Educational Leadership is the official publication of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. It is published eight times a year, focusing on current educational trends, including professional development. Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1250 North Pitt Street, Alexandria, VA 22314-1453.

Phi Delta Kappan, published monthly, is a source of information on current issues in education reform and professional development. Phi Delta Kappa, Inc., 408 N. Union, P.O. Box 789, Bloomington, IN 47402.

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